

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8439
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER//J2 & EUDAC
USEUCOM AIDES VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3528

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, LE
SUBJ: REFLECTIONS ON THE IHDIN MASSACRE

REF: BEIRUT 3270 (NOTAL)

1. SINCE THE MASSACRE OF TONY FRANJIYAH, HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER, AND 33 OTHER FRANJIYAH SUPPORTERS IN IHDIN ON JUNE 13, WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER THE STORY OF THE ATTACK AND THE REASONS BEHIND IT, AND TO ASSESS ITS IMPACT ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. THE FOLLOWING ARE OUR PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS.

2. WHO DID IT AND WHY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE ATTACK WAS CARRIED OUT BY MEMBERS OF THE PHALANGE PARTY, USING AT LEAST SOME OF ITS MEMBERS FROM NORTH LEBANON WHO HAD PERSONAL GRUDGES
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AGAINST THE FRANJIYAH FAMILY. THE KIND OF EQUIPMENT AND NUMBER OF MEN INVOLVED, AT LEAST 200 AND PERHPAS AS MANY AS 600, INDICATE THAT THE OPERATION WAS PLANNED AND SUPERVISED BY THE PARTY'S SENIOR MILITARY LEADER -- BACHIR GEMAYEL.

3. SOME PEOPLE CLAIM THAT TONY FRANJIYAH WAS NOT THE TARGET; ACCORDING TO ONE VERSION TONY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN KILLED HAD

HE NOT FIRST KILLED THREE OF THE PHALANGIST ATTACKERS WHO WERE LOOKING NOT FOR HIM BUT FOR FRANJIYAH FOLLOWERS INVOLVED IN THE EARLIER ASSASSINATION OF PHALANGE LEADER JUD AL-BAYIH IN BATROUN, AND WHO WERE REPORTED TO BE HIDING IN TONY'S HOUSE. HOWEVER, FOUR DIFFERENT, WELL-INFORMED LOCAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING TWO PHALANGE PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBERS, HAVE TOLD US THEY BELIEVE THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE OPERATION WAS TO KILL TONY FRANJIYAH. THE MANNER IN WHICH TONY AND HIS FAMILY WERE ALLEGEDLY KILLED IMPLIES THAT IT WAS NOT A MISTAKE -- THAT THEY WERE DELIBERATELY SLAUGHTERED. THESE SOURCES ALSO BELIEVE THAT BACHIR GEMAYEL PERSONALLY PLANNED AND DIRECTED THE OPERATION.

4. WHY, IN SPITE OF THE TREMENDOUS RISK TO HIMSELF, DID BACHIR DO IT? SOME BELIEVE THAT THE ASSAULT ON THE FRANJIYAHS IS THE OPENING BATTLE IN A PHALANGIST DRIVE TO TAKE OVER COMPLETE CONTROL OF MARONITE LEBANON AND THEN LEBANON AS A WHOLE. BACHIR GEMAYEL HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS CONTEMPT FOR PRESIDENT SARKIS AND HIS CONVICTION THAT ALL TRUE LEBANESE WOULD JOIN HIM IN A HOLY WAR TO CREATE A STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND TO RID LEBANON OF THE PALESTINIANS. PHALANGIST BULLY-BOYS HAVE BEEN FEUDING WITH THE OTHER MARONITE PARTIES AND TERRORIZING THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION FOR MONTHS AND WE HAVE RECENTLY HEARD SEVERAL REPORTS OF A NEW ATMOSPHERE OF INTIMIDATION IN EAST BEIRUT. THE GEMAYELS MAY BELIEVE THEIR TIME HAS COME.

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5. IF THIS IS SO, BACHIR MAY HAVE MOVED TOO SOON. THE CHRISTIANS OF THE NORTH HAVE BEEN BLOODIED BUT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN DESTROYED. SO FAR, THEIR REACTION HAS BEEN VERBAL BUT SOONER OR LATER, DESPITE PAPAL INTERVENTION, THE FRANJIYAHS WILL DRAW THEIR GUNS. THE OTHER CHRISTIAN PARTIES, INCLUDING CHAMOUN'S PNL, MUST REGARD THE IHDIN MASSACRE WITH SOME TREPIDATION. IF THE PHALANGISTS SUCCEED IN DESTROYING THE FRANJIYAHS, WILL THE OTHER CHRISTIAN PARTIES SUFFER THE SAME FATE? CHAMOUN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND HIS CONDOLENCE CALL ON SULEIMAN FRANJIYAH SUGGEST THAT HE IS TRYING TO KEEP HIS OPTIONS OPEN AND AVOID THIS FATE.

6. THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS THAT THE PHALANGE PARTY ITSELF IS SPLIT ON THE WISDOM OF THE IHDIN OPERATION. MANY MEMBERS OF THE PARTY'S POLITICAL BUREAU APPARENTLY HAD NO IDEA THAT AN OPERATION OF THIS MAGNITUDE WAS PLANNED AND CERTAINLY DID NOT EXPECT THAT SOMEONE AS PROMINENT AS TONY FRANGIEH WOULD BE KILLED, OR THAT TONY'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER WOULD BE SLAUGHTERED. EVEN THOUGH THE PHALANGE PARTY IS CLEARLY THE STRONGEST LEBANESE ARMED GROUP, AND HAS MANY SUPPORTERS IN THE LEBANESE ARMY, IT IS UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT AS LONG AS THE SYRIAN ARMY IS IN LEBANON, AND PRESIDENT SARKIS KEEPS HIS

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7. THE PHALANGE-ISRAELI CONNECTION. THE "COINCIDENCE" THAT THE PHALANGE ATTACK ON IHDIN OCCURRED ON THE SAME DAY (JUNE 13) THAT THE ISRAELIS WITHDREW FROM SOUTH LEBANON HAS ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD COMMENT HERE. (WE NOTE THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE ALSO REMARKED ON THIS.) IT IS WELL KNOWN HERE THAT BOTH CHAMOUN AND THE PHALANGISTS ARE IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THE ISRAELIS AND THAT THE BULK OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA OPERATING IN SOUTH LEBANON, WITH ISRAELI SUPPORT, IS PHALANGIST. ONE THEORY HERE IS THAT BACHIR GEMAYEL PICKED JUNE 13 FOR HIS ATTACK ON IHDIN, WITH ISRAELI ENCOURAGEMENT, IN ORDER TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH. ANOTHER THEORY IS THAT THE ISRAELIS SUPPORTED THE OPERATION IN ORDER TO WEAKEN THE MARONITES INTERNALLY. (THE PALESTINIANS SEEM TO BE CONFIDENT THAT THIS IS WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN.) ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, THE ISRAELIS FIGURE THAT THE PHALANGISTS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON

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ALL OF LEBANON AND WILL EVENTUALLY OPT FOR PARTITION, THUS LEAVING LEBANON BETWEEN THE DAMASCUS ROAD AND THE LITANI TO THE PALESTINIANS AND THE LEBANESE LEFTISTS IN A NEW ERSATZ PALESTINIAN HOMELAND.

8. THE LONG-RUN POLITICAL IMPACT. ONE MUSLIM INTELLECTUAL/ POLITICIAN SUGGESTS THAT IN THE LONG RUN THIS DIRECT CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO OF THE MAJOR CHRISTIAN GROUPS MAY HAVE A POSITIVE RATHER THAN A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION IN LEBANON AS A WHOLE. HE ARGUES THAT BEFORE THE FRANJIYAH/GEMAYEL SPLIT, THE MARONITES HAD BEEN MOVING TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A MONOLITHIC CHRISTIAN ELOC WHOSE POSITION ON BASIC POLITICAL ISSUES WOULD HAVE BEEN SO EXTREME AND SO RIGID THAT ANY RECONCILIATION WITH THE MUSLIMS IN LEBANON (NOT TO MENTION THE PALESTINIANS) WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. AS A RESULT OF THE IHDIN MASSACRE, HOWEVER, AND THE RESULTING WAR OF WORDS BETWEEN FRANJIYAH, SUPPORTED BY THE OTHER CHRISTIANS OF THE NORTH, AND THE PHALANGISTS, ANY PROSPECT OF SUCH A MONOLITHIC MARONITE BLOC HAS DISAPPEARED. STORIES ARE CIRCULATING IN BEIRUT THAT MEMBERS OF THE FRANJIYAH CLAN AND THEIR POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MOVING OUT OF PHALANGE-DOMINATED EAST BEIRUT AND INTO THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF WEST BEIRUT. THE PRESS HAS NOTED THAT FRANJIYAH HAS VACATED HIS RESIDENCE AT NACCACHE, NORTHEAST OF BEIRUT, AND MOVED THE FURNITURE ELSEWHERE. THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS THAT THE FRANJIYAH CLAN, HAVING ALREADY MADE ITS PEACE WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER KARAMI, REPRESENTING THE SUNNI MUSLIMS OF NORTH LEBANON, IS NOW SEEKING ADDITIONAL ALLIANCES WITH OTHER NON-MARONITE GROUPS. THE NAMES OF KABALAN AND SAMIR FRANJIYAH, THE SONS OF SULEIMAN'S OLDER BROTHER HAMID, WHO WAS INCAPACITATED BY A MASSIVE STROKE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, ARE SUDDENLY BEING MENTIONED, REPORTEDLY PLAYING THE ROLE OF MIDDLEMEN IN SEEKING ALLIANCES WITH OTHER LEBANESE POLITICAL GROUPS. THUS, THE POL-
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ITICAL LINE-UP IN LEBANON, WHICH SIX MONTHS AGO WAS DOMINATED BY A FAIRLY COHESIVE LEBANESE (CHRISTIAN) FRONT, IS NOT BREAKING DOWN AND SHIFTING.

9. POLITICALLY, LEBANON MAY HAVE REACHED A TURNING POINT. THE LEBANESE FRONT, WHICH HAS BEEN SLOWLY COMING APART FOR MONTHS, EXISTS NO MORE. NOT ONLY ARE THE FRANJIYAHS AND THE MARONITES OF THE NORTH ALL NOW THE SWORN ENEMIES OF THE PHALANGE, EVEN THE CHAMOUNISTS AND THE MONKS OF CHARBEL KASSIS MUST BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE PHALANGIST INTENTIONS. PRESIDENT SARKIS NOW HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME CONTROVERSIAL DECISIONS WITHOUT THE PROSPECT OF THE UNITED OPPO-

SITION OF THE CHRISTIAN PARTIES THAT HE WOULD HAVE FACED SIX MONTHS AGO.

10. HOWEVER, SARKIS MAY HAVE TO ACT QUICKLY. IF THE GEMAYELS AND THE PHALANGE ARE GIVEN TIME TO EXPAND THEIR CONTROL OVER MARONITE LEBANON, THEY MAY BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT (AND PERHAPS EVEN THE SYRIANS) IN CERTAIN AREAS AND PLUNGE THE COUNTRY INTO A SYRIAN-MARONITE WAR OR PARTITION. SARKIS' SPEECH ON JUNE 23 (BEIRUT 3482) SUGGESTS THAT HE SEES THE NEED FOR FIRM ACTION, BUT IT GIVES FEW CLUES AS TO WHAT THAT ACTION WILL BE AND LITTLE ASSURANCE THAT HE WILL MOVE AS QUICKLY AND FORCEFULLY AS THE SITUATION DEMANDS. PARKER

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